

View on Sacred Minimalism and music by Pēteris Vasks as incarnation of theological ideas¹

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Music of Pēteris Vasks (1946) presents him as one of the most significant Latvian composers and the most popular representative of Latvian music culture abroad as well, who this year (2016) is celebrating his 70th jubilee and whose education is connected with Lithuania as well.

Pēteris Vasks in his creativity tends to speak about global and timeless problems. Birth and death, hate and forgiveness, harmony like a choral and dissonant chaos are themes that are represented in many different sonic forms of the composer's works. Though he has mastered and synthesized in his own language many different 20th century composition techniques, the dominating musical expression is his desire to certify the necessity of a harmonic global feeling, to renew the worth of classical music and bestow upon it a new sound. Altogether, neoromanticism is clearly sensed in the music works by Pēteris Vasks alongside with an echo of a new expression of the spiritual aesthetics – *New Spirituality*, *New Simplicity* or *Holy Minimalism*.

The ideas of the Latvian composer have achieved some kind of theological level, creating his own lexicon of musical means of expression as the way to show his faith. Therefore, this paper considers such actual tendencies of music creations by Pēteris Vasks:

- *Preaching* through the sounds as a phenomenon of the direction of *New Spirituality*;
- Semantics of the Block chords' texture or chorale as the most prevalent presentation of thinking;
- *Chorale and obstruction* as dominating textures that reveal the struggle between good and evil;
- Birdsong and bird symbol perception as a mediator between God and humans – the continuation of ornithological-theological input of Olivier Messiaen;
- The untraditional, *modern* usage of traditional sacred genres and their elements that nowadays allows for preaching through the music in concert halls.

Each of the above-mentioned themes alongside with the lineage of Pēteris Vasks has its own theological source and presents not only the style of Latvian composers, but allows for a deeper understanding of *Sacred Minimalism* aesthetical and stylistical conception as well.

KEY WORDS: Pēteris Vasks, sacred music, *Holy Minimalism*, spirituality, contemporary music

Preaching through the sounds, confession-like revelation, manifestation of religiousness are the most actual and dominating themes of the spiritual aesthetics of the *Minimalism* – one of the actual phenomena of the 20th – beginning of the 21st century, which is widely spread in different ways in various countries and nationalities. Apart from the fact that one of the earliest and the most popular *Minimalism* was developed in the USA, one can notice the bright examples of the so-called

¹ This topic was observed in the paper during the conference *Ars Sacra* at Emanuel University of Oradea (Romania; 14–17 December 2013).

Folk Minimalism in the music of Baltic states (Bronius Kutavičius in Lithuania, Veljo Tormis in Estonia, partly – Pauls Dambis in Latvia), which was developed under the auspice of the *new folk wave*. After all, the most popular became *Sacred Minimalism* with bright representatives of this aesthetics: Henryk Mikołaj Górecki (Poland), Giya Kancheli (Georgia), Arvo Pärt (Estonia) and John Tavener (Great Britain), including also Latvian composers, among them Ēriks Ešenvalds (1977), Rihards Dubra (1964), Georgs Pelēcis (1947) and Pēteris Vasks (1946), who celebrates his 70th jubilee this year and whose education is connected with Lithuania. Therefore, the publishing of the overview of Vasks in Lithuania is a very logical and desirable option.

Owing to a lack of a better description called *Sacred, Mystic* or *Holy Minimalism*, the music of the above-mentioned composers has found an enormously receptive audience, full concert halls and a large amount of best-selling CDs by recombining classical music with contemplative spirituality. The popularity of Górecki, Pärt, Tavener and Vasks is thrilling because they reject values typically associated with contemporary classical music. *Sacred Minimalism* means to music what contemplative spirituality means to prayer. For most of us a prayer means addressing our words to God, but in a contemplative prayer the most important is to listen and receive **silence** and, therefore, to let God speak within us.

Whereas in traditional classical music one expects to hear the development of musical ideas moving forward to a climactic conclusion, *Sacred Minimalism music seems to go nowhere* – and that is done intentionally. The purpose is **contemplation**. The music is **meditative, hypnotic** and **gently repetitive**, working on the listener in the same way as the prayer in the Christian tradition, where one might continuously repeat a word or two from the Scriptures to be drawn deeper into the prayer. The gentle repetition complements the music with **a feeling of stasis, of being suspended in time**. According to Pärt, *Time and timelessness are connected. This instant and eternity are struggling within us. And this is the cause of all our contradictions, our obstinacy, our narrow-mindedness, our faith and our grief.*

In his creation work, Pēteris Vasks tends to speak about global and timeless problems. Birth and death, hate and forgiveness, harmony like a choral and dissonant chaos are themes that are represented in many different sonic forms. Though the composer has mastered and synthesized in the music language of his own many different 20th century composition techniques, the most pronounced of them being aleatorics, the dominating musical expression is his desire to profess the necessity of a harmonic global feeling, to renew the worth of classical music and bestow a new sounding upon it. Altogether, neoromanticism is clearly sensed in works by Pēteris

Vasks alongside with an echo of a new expression of the spiritual aesthetics – *New Spirituality, New Simplicity, Holy Minimalism* or *Neo-Contemplative Music*³.

The ideas of Pēteris Vasks have also achieved some kind of theological level, creating his own lexicon of musical means of expression as the way to show his faith. The father of Pēteris Vasks was a Baptist pastor, so the composer was close to the church since his early childhood. Therefore, faith has affected his interests and seekings in music too. In one interview the composer said: *What my father did, being a pastor, what he included in his sermons, I try to put into music. To speak sonically. To confirm in faith. It could be called differently – as a belief in God, as a composition, which confirms the existence of God, as a harmony. Father asked his parishioners to draw up endurance and strength from religion. I try to do the same in my music*⁴ – this is the way of music perception by Pēteris Vasks, one of the most significant Latvian composers and the most popular representative of Latvian music culture abroad⁵.

Pēteris Vasks is the only Latvian composer who has signed a contract for regular release of his music works with the world-famous music publishing company *Schott Musik International*. For his outstanding music creations the composer has received many awards and honours both in Latvia and abroad. It is notable that even one of the main belt asteroids has been given his name (16513 – 1990 VP₆). However, as to genres, his sacred music is very universal – Pēteris Vasks creates in a multitude of genres of different denominations. He is a composer who speaks in generalized and ecumenical music categories. The music texture by Pēteris Vasks is also quite minimalistic. To point out his musical language, which has merged with tendencies of music by *sacred minimalists*, an insight in the most notable musical categories is given.

The first aesthetical category that is notable in creativity of Pēteris Vasks and is still actual for other *sacred minimalists* is the perception of **silence**. And not only as pauses – breaks, but also as a topic of the composition, as an aesthetical term, a category, which is an important part of meditation, contemplation and prayer.

3 The theme of the style of *sacred minimalists* was observed in more details in the paper *From Modernism to Postmodernism: The Modulation and Correlation between Two Styles in the Context of Musical Works by Sacred Minimalists*, presented during the conference *Between Universal and Local: From Modernism to Postmodernism*, which was held at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana University (28–30 September 2015). The article of this paper is already submitted to publication and is going to be published during 2016.

4 *To, ko mans tēvs darīja, mācītājs būdams, ko ielika savās svētrunās, es cenšos darīt mūzikā. Pateikt skaņās. Apliecināt ticībā. To var saukt dažādi – ticība Dievam, Dievu apliecinošs skaņdarbs, harmonija. Tēvs svētrunās aicināja tiekties uz augšu, smelties spēku un izturību ticībā. To cenšos darīt arī savos darbos* (Aperāne 1998: 50). Translation from Latvian by Jūlija Jonāne.

5 It is notable that in 1970 Pēteris Vasks graduated from Lithuanian State Conservatory, the class of double-bass with Vytautas Sereika. He could not study in Latvian State Conservatory because of his origin, his father being a Baptist pastor, but he could get his higher education in Lithuania where atheistic ideas were not so widely spread. However, in 1978 he graduated from Latvian State Conservatory, the class of composition of Valentīns Utkins.

Vasks shows the necessity of this aspect in different titles of his compositions:

- *The Fruit of Silence* for mixed choir and piano *ad libitum* (verses by Mother Teresa; 2013);
- *Voices in the Silence/Quieta*, a vocalise for 6 voices and female choir (1997);
- *Silent songs*, a vocal cycle for mixed choir (verses by Knuts Skujenieks, Leons Briedis, 1979).

The most prevalent presentation of thinking of Pēteris Vasks is the consonant chord and the texture of Block chords as semantics of a chorale that confirmed itself through the history of music as a pronouncer of clear and pure emotions. Very often the consonance in Pēteris Vasks' music is associated with light – sometimes gentle, sometimes radiant. A bright example of perceiving chord texture as light is seen in his concerto for violin and strings *Distant Light* (1997).

One more tendency of quite minimalistic music language is linked with the development of **chorale texture**. The music of Pēteris Vasks, like all music creations by *sacred minimalists*, develops very slowly – practically always composers begin with a long consonant chord, then with small changes very carefully moving the process on. This can be explained by music being a process that evolves in time and that needs time to be heard. It means that first of all music is a horizontal process. But music is also a set of certain sounds, which enables vertical harmony as well. It means that each chord is a vertical assonance with two significant qualities. The first important quality in every vertical is **sonic** that includes colour, timbre, register, location in texture, typesetting, etc. The second fundamental aspect of chord is its functionality or relationships between other chords within the framework of a particular tonality or other composition technique.

Approximately since late Renaissance, composers and listeners have been paying their attention mainly to the horizontally-oriented development of music, focusing on the effect of alternating sounds or harmony. The horizontally-oriented intensity, in its turn, did not allow to listen to and enjoy the peculiarities of each particular chord. Referring to the vertical construction of music and its sonical properties, it has to take time and be prolonged. In the technology of composing this prolongation could manifest itself in rhythmically intensive repetition or using of a slow tempo, or even stopping on a concrete chord, savouring its phonic, texture's and timbre characteristics.

Listening to the sounding of a vertical assonance, horizontally-oriented development of music seems to be stopped, *to go nowhere*, but at the very moment a vertical direction of music is activating and we are going deep into the sounds of a particular musical moment, focusing on its details. And this, in its turn, allows us for a rather quick diving into a prayer-like contemplation in music perception that is one of the main purposes of sacredness in music.

The aspect of the sonic perception of music vertical became topical only for composers of the period of the Romanticism. This is confirmed by the fact that *special chords* started appearing in the music creations of the composers of that time, permeating all their music works (for example, we know the Chopin's chord, Tristan's chord of Wagner, Grieg's chord, Rachmaninof's and Scriabin's chords, etc). For these composers, one particular chord became topical and often intertwined in the texture to attract attention of listeners. Contrasted to the above we cannot talk about the specific chords of Vienna classics or works of the early Romanticists. Only in the harmony of Franz Schubert in chord relationships one often can note the use of VI low chords in major tonalities. But it still belongs to relationships between chords.

Later – in the musical works of Impressionists – every single chord became topical and important. Claude Debussy and his followers use parallelism of one particular chord to prolong its sounding, to have time for getting an insight into its sonic colours. It is noteworthy that in general, concerning the tempo, the music of Impressionists became slower.

Next composers, who highlighted the importance of music verticality and tried to prevent its intense development horizontally, are *USA minimalists* of the 70-ies of the 20th century (Phillip Glass, Terry Reilly, Steve Reich and others). Using quite an intense movement of rhythm, they repeated one short phase of music, letting the listeners go into the sounding and sharply perceive every subtle change. As we know, this technique, also called *repetitive* or *music of phase*, was based on interest in the Eastern and African music traditions, which include praxis of contemplation as well.

The next level in the evolution of the vertical relevance refers to the *sacred minimalists*, who spread this technique widely in Europe, using theological basis of Christianity. For *sacred minimalists* practically each chord is very important; therefore, they stop down the intensity of the rhythm and fast tempo (composers use it only to make some short contrast, however, rather seldom). This kind of attitude to the chord is observed almost in every composition, including *Te Deum* for organ by Pēteris Vasks. At the very beginning of the composition the composer makes us listen to the full-sounding *A minor* chord for a long time (the first chord, bars 1–4, sounds approx. 6–7 seconds, and for the second time, bars 7–12, it sounds about 10 seconds). The next chord – VII₄₃ gives a short contrast to consonance, as well as bar 7, with active motion of quarters (see Example 1).

In such a way *sacred minimalists* achieve the above-mentioned effect of contemplating. The slow chorale is like a church chant that rises above the vaults of the church and takes over the space, becoming like an echo – growing slower and covering more and more areas.

Te Deum (1991)

Pēteris Vasks (1946)

Example 1. Pēteris Vasks. *Te Deum*⁶ for organ

The next most pronounced element of Pēteris Vasks' music texture is **canto**. The composer says: *Music often tends to be like perpetuum mobile. But for me – canto perpetuo. This is my proposed positive ideal – eternal chant/canto*⁷. *Cantus* as a monophonic texture or *cantabile* as the main way of articulation as well as using of cantilena – a vocal-like melody – is the central postulate of Pēteris Vasks' stylistics and one of the most popular appellations in the titles of his music creations as well:

Canto di forza for organo (2006) for 12 cellos (2005);

Episodi e Canto Perpetuo for violin, cello, piano (1985);

Cantus ad pacem. Concerto per organo (1984);

Cantabile per archi (1979).

The use of this element both in the title and technologically once again confirms the minimalistic tendency and music outset being grounded on the basic genre models of religious music – slow and steady, minimal-formed Gregorian chant and chant as a symbol of church music as well. To make this chant extremely long lasting, the composer uses string instruments or organ very often. As an ex-double-bass player, he knows very well all the possibilities of these instruments and right in the scores for strings achieves a very high level of emotional and artistic expression.

The **chorale and obstruction, the consonance and dissonance** are the dominating textures that alternately manifest the struggle between good and evil. To show

⁶ The quote in the example is from Pēteris Vasks, *Te Deum per organo* (Mainz: Schott, 1993).

⁷ Обычно в музыке бывает *перпетуум мобиле*. У меня же – *canto perpetuo*. Это и есть предлагаемый мною позитивный идеал – вечное пение (Хараджанян 1996: 310). Translation from Russian by Jūlija Jonāne.

the beauty of choral and chant, their timelessness and eternity, their connection with positive, the composer presents obstruction episodes that sometimes make dramaturgy very conflicting. This kind of texture represents the dramaturgy of most music compositions by Pēteris Vasks, and in one case it is also reflected in the title: *Episodi e Canto Perpetuo* for violin, cello, piano (1985).

The next important sacred symbol in music by Pēteris Vasks is **bird** – the voice of nature that is perceived as a mediator between God and humans. Using of this symbol shows the continuation of ornithological-theological input of Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992). Pēteris Vasks is not an ornithologist and reproduces the singing of birds not so precisely. Asking about being influenced by the musical oeuvre of Messiaen, the composer only admits: *this is my version of birds, my vision, my associations, delight, admiration, it all together*⁸. Therefore, here we can notice only parallel common themes (among them is also faith, religion, etc.) – a slight inspiration by the great French artist. The symbol of bird was formed as important in the 70-ties and 80-ties of the 20th century, when Pēteris Vasks under the Soviet regime didn't have the right and opportunity to speak even briefly about the notion of God, or to use sacred genres and verses in his music. Therefore, birds became mediators – not only between God and humans, but between religion and forcibly atheistic society as well.

The symbol of bird is incorporated in compositions in three different ways. Firstly, there are compositions with bird symbol in the title, and also in the texture the singing of birds is multiform and freely imitated. In these compositions, the main timbre that presents the singing of birds is traditionally the flute:

Landscape with birds for flute solo (1980);

Music for the flown-away birds for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and French horn (1977).

Secondly, birds are also frequently presented in choir music, and therefore the composer has chosen a special text with the symbol of bird. For example, in 1981 the ballad *The Tomtit's Message* for female choir was created. It became so popular that Latvian conductor Māris Sirmais (1969) asked the composer to make a version of this ballad for mixed choir. In this way the second version of the ballad was created.

Using of the symbol of birds is defined by poetry – verses by Uldis Bērziņš (1944). This poet perceives it as an archetype of the mythical form of Latvian folklore, according to which the bird represents the soul of a dead person who in most cases has been killed in the war:

Who pummels the gate this morning? I want to sleep.

Wept eye, the sun rises in the clouds, may the little brother ride,

⁸ *Tā ir mana versija par putniem, mana vīzija, manas asociācijas, sajūsma, aprīna, tas viss kopā* (Jakubone 1990: 148–161).

*May it's not hard for the steed.
No, war master laughs.
And only this remains: coat from oat panicles, hat from pea blossoms.
Many years elapse⁹.*

This is one of the most programmatic of the above-mentioned tendencies – with text and narration, message, as well as imitation of tomtit's singing in choir voices that is incorporated in a more sophisticated manner and was inspired by Latvian folklore as well (See Example 2).

The Tomtit's Message

Uldis Bērziņš

Pēteris Vasks

Example 2¹⁰. Pēteris Vasks. *The Tomtit's Message* for mixed choir *a cappella*¹¹

9 *Kas sit pie vārtiem šorīt gulēt gribu
Aizraudāta acs lec saule mākoņos lai mazais brālis jā
lai kumeļam nav grūti.
Nē smejas kara kungs.
Un tik vien paliek: mēteliš to auzu skaru tā cepure to
zirņu ziedu paiet gadu daudz.*

(Bērziņš 1980: 34) Translation from Latvian by Gundega Vaska.

10 The verse in example 2 in Latvian: *kas sit pie vārtiem šorīt, kas?*
Translation into English: *Who pummels the gate this morning, who?*

11 The example of score from Vasks, P. *Ziles ziņa*. Mainz: Schott Music, 2007.

In the context of this song the bird in the music compositions by Pēteris Vasks is primarily used as a symbol of Latvia, his fatherland, including folk songs, symbols, perception of the nature. Finally, the bird is presented not only as an incarnation of a passed-away soul, but also like a mediator between all three spheres – Earth, Inferno and Heaven.

The third use of the symbol of bird becomes evident in the music of Vasks, depicting spring and summer, which is rich in different landscapes and sceneries. Such music was topical in the late 90-ties of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, and in these compositions birds are mainly portrayed simply as an integral part of nature, but not as the central object of musical composition:

Plainscapes for piano trio (2011);

Music for a Summer Evening for piano solo (2009);

Voices in the Quiet, vocalize for 6 solo voices and female choir (1997);

Spring Piano Music quasi una sonata (1995);

The First symphony *Voices* for the symphony orchestra (1991);

Spring Sonata for string sextet (1987);

Little Summer Music for violin and piano (1985);

Summer songs for 6 strings (String Quartet No. 2; 1984).

However, by imitating the singing of birds composers want to single out not so much exotic songs of birds as the ethical purity of a human being. Upon deeper analysis of sources of inspiration in music of Messiaen himself, one can assume that inspiration of nature, landscapes and birds actually originates from the works of French Harpsichordists of the first half of the 18th century. They might have inspired the symbols and themes of Pēteris Vasks' music through the manner of bird-singing imitation; however, conceptually, for the Latvian composer the symbol of bird is not only the theme for the apery.

Proceeding with the insights about the common features between Olivier Messiaen's and Pēteris Vasks' musical heritage, some other genres of music created by Messiaen should be mentioned, which the Latvian composer invokes as well. For example, theological mysticism of Olivier Messiaen is manifested through such notions in the titles as *gaze: *Vingt regards sur l'enfant-Jésus** for piano (*Twenty gazes on the Christ-child*; 1944). Undeniably, such a title is used very seldom in all music literature, but among music pieces by Pēteris Vasks one can find the *Three Gazes/Trinity* for open instrumental group (1979).

The feeling of the presence of the Lord was also very important for both Olivier Messiaen and Pēteris Vasks. Among the compositions by Olivier Messiaen we come across the cycle *Trois petites liturgies de la présence divine* (*Three small liturgies of the Divine Presence*; 1943–44) for women's voices, piano solo, ondes Martenot solo and orchestra. It has much in common with the concert *Presence* for cello and string orchestra (2012) by Pēteris Vasks.

One more aspect of the music creations by Pēteris Vasks is an untraditional use of conventional sacred genres and their elements, which nowadays allows for preaching through the music in concert halls. This tendency comprises first of all the use of traditional genres for concert performing. The different versions of the following music pieces (for example, *a cappella* and with orchestra) confirm it:

Mass for mixed choir (2000), 2nd edition for mixed choir and organ (2001); 3rd edition for mixed choir and string orchestra (2005);

Dona nobis pacem for mixed choir and organ or seven instruments; also version for mixed choir and string orchestra (1996);

Pater noster for mixed choir (1991) in memory of composer's father; also version for mixed choir and string orchestra (1995).

The most popular sacred composition by Pēteris Vasks is *Pater noster*. It is the brightest example of Vasks' stylistics when using choral in a rather small and purposeful development. This composition reveals also several of the above-mentioned stylistic tendencies of *Sacred Minimalism*: slow tempo, texture of vertical chords that are long-lasting and expanded in time. The lyricism that emotionally disposes the listeners towards common prayer can be illustrated by the following example (see Example 3):

Pater noster

Pēteris Vasks (1946)

Cantabilissimo *mp* ca. 72

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system covers measures 1-7, with lyrics: Pa - ter nos - ter, qui es in coe - . The second system covers measures 8-12, with lyrics: lis: sanc - ti - fi - ce - tur. The third system covers measures 13-16, with lyrics: no - men tu - um, . The score is for Soprano (S.) and Tenor/Bass (B.). The tempo is marked *Cantabilissimo* and the dynamic is *mp*. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 2/2. The music features long, sustained vertical chords and a slow, contemplative pace.

SOPRANO
ALTO

TENOR
BASS

S.

B.

S.

B.

mf

Example 3. Pēteris Vasks. *Pater noster* for mixed choir *a cappella*

A different way to interpret traditional sacred vocal genres more widely and for larger audience is to create their instrumental version. This is how the hymn *Te Deum* for organ solo (1991) and *Credo* for orchestra (2009) were written. The instrumental versions of the above compositions display several notable features of the archetype of the vocal genre, such as mood, the division of the contents, dramaturgical development and, finally, its typical intonations, texture and dynamics. For example, in spite of instrumental input for organ solo, *Te Deum* is one of the most outstanding interpretations of *Te Deum* genre in Latvian contemporary music. First and foremost, it indicates the structure of ternary form that is easy adjustable to the verses of this hymn and its content.

The majestic opening theme allows listeners to visualize the mightiness and omnipotence of Eternal Judge (see Example 1). It replaces the fugato phase that with seconds, fourths, fifths and sevenths adds to the medieval roughness. The middle part of the instrumental hymn is devoted to contemplation and meditation – the swaying intonation of thirds immerses the listener into bright reflection. Such elements of the texture as Block chords and fugato point to the integrity between the given opus and the long-established traditions of the genre of *Te Deum*. The range of melodic intonations, comprising the predominance of rhythmically active, internally concentrated melodic move and cantilena, is consistent with the overall melos of the genre and the generally widespread laudatory mood which enables apprehension of the majesty of God.

Te Deum is the only composition of Pēteris Vasks, in which the religiousness of the composer is merged with the traditional genre of religious music. Despite the relatively close link with the archetype of the genre, this particular composition discloses the style, beliefs and ideas of its creator.

On the contrary, *Credo* for orchestra is interpreted in an elevated mood, thus approaching the stylistics of the prayer as a gentle confirmation of faith. Here the predominating intonations are also cantilena-like and vocal. The slow repetitions of chord sections remind of the choral chanting style. However, in the middle section of this composition Vasks has put a fragment from the *Te Deum* as a quotation, in such a way blending melodically and thematically the instrumental version of both genres.

Very often the title of the composition gives only a slight indication of sacredness, being used in a more universal understanding of spirituality, displaying a rather distant link with religiousness. Such notions like *Epifania*, *Vox amoris*, *Angel*, *Adventus*, *Dolorosa*, *Lauda*, etc. are taken from Christianity and only indirectly point to religiousness and spirituality:

Epifania for string orchestra, dedicated to Juha Kangas (2010);

Vox amoris fantasy for violin and string orchestra (2009);

Birth for mixed choir (text by Inese Zandere; 2009);

*Viatore*¹² for strings or organ (2001);
Lonely Angel, meditation for violin and string orchestra (1999);
Distant Light, concerto for violin and string orchestra, dedicated to Gidon Kremer (1997);
Musica Adventus for string orchestra (1996);
Musica seria per organo (1988);
Musicue du soir (Evening music) for French horn and organ (1988);
Lauda per orchestra for symphony orchestra (1986);
Musica dolorosa for string orchestra, in memory of sister Marta (1983);
In Memory of a Friend for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, French horn (1982);
Touches for solo oboe (1982);
Message for large string orchestra, percussion, two pianos (1982).

To sum up, the general overview of the musical oeuvre of Pēteris Vasks confirms him thematically and stylistically as a representative and follower of *Sacred Minimalism* and its ideological founder Olivier Messiaen, who was the first important and outstanding artist with a completely different, even esoteric perception of the world, faith and religion. Each of the above-mentioned themes alongside with the lineage of Pēteris Vasks has its own theological source and presents not only the style of Latvian composers, but, hopefully, allows for a deeper understanding of *Sacred Minimalism*, its composers, and its aesthetical and stylistic conceptions as well.

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¹² This opus, dedicated to Arvo Pärt, proves the interests of Pēteris Vasks in the music of Arvo Pärt and his individuality as a wanderer (if translated from Italian) and kind of a superior (if translated from Latin) in the field of *Sacred Minimalism*.

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Žvilgsnis į sakralinį minimalizmą ir Peterio Vasko muziką kaip į teologinių idėjų įkūnijimą

Santrauka

Vieno žymiausių Latvijos kompozitorių Peterio Vasko (g. 1946) muzika atspindi globalias ir amžinas problemas – gimimą ir mirtį, neapykantą ir atleidimą, choralinę harmoniją ir disonansinį chaosą. Nors savo muzikos kalboje jis yra įvaldęs daugybę įvairių XX a. kompozicinių technikų, vyraujančią muzikinę ekspresiją skatina troškimas pabrėžti visuotinės harmonijos svarbą, atnaujinti klasikinės muzikos vertę ir suteikti jai naują skambesį. Vasko kūryboje aiškiai jaučiamas neoromantizmas kartu su naująja dvasingos estetikos išraiška, atspindinčia kompozitoriaus religinius įsitikinimus, – *naujuoju dvasingumu, naujuoju paprastumu* arba *sakraliniu minimalizmu*.

Straipsnyje aptariamos šios Peterio Vasko muzikos tendencijos: pamokslavimas garsais kaip naujojo dvasingumo krypties reiškinys; akordinės, arba choralo faktūros semantika kaip būdingiausia mąstymo išraiška; choralas ir obstrukcija kaip vyraujančios faktūros, atskleidžiančios kovą tarp gėrio ir blogio; paukščių garsai ir paukščio simbolis kaip tarpininkas tarp Dievo ir žmogaus – Olivier Messiaeno ornitologinio-teologinio indėlio tąsa; netradicinis, modernus tradicinių sakralinės muzikos žanrų ir jų elementų panaudojimas, suteikiantis galimybę pamokslauti muzikos garsais koncertų salėse.

Kiekviena iš šių temų turi savo teologines ištakas ir pristato ne vien Peterio Vasko stilių, bet ir leidžia plačiau suvokti sakralinio minimalizmo estetines ir stilistines koncepcijas.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: Peteris Vaskas, sakralinė muzika, sakralinis minimalizmas, dvasingumas, šiuolaikinė muzika